

THE CATHOLIC RADICAL

“...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed.” Peter Maurin

October/November 2021

Price: For whatever it's worth.

Church in Deep Water

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Two *New York Times* editorials caught my attention. The first, by Ross Douthout, “The Ungovernable Catholic Church,” (7/29/21) highlighted the struggle between liberal and conservative Catholics since Vatican II. It included a telling quote from Father Thomas Reese SJ: “Finding young candidates for the priesthood who support [Pope] Francis and want to be celibate is like looking for Catholic unicorns.”

The second editorial, “America Needs Catholicism,” by Matthew Walther (8/1/21) argued “Catholic positions — which is to say; responses formed by papal encyclicals, the lives and writings of the saints, the traditions of academic theology and natural law philosophy — do not line up with the mainstream of either progressive or conservative opinion in this country.”

Both writers placed the Church in a time when politicians take ever more extreme conservative and liberal positions. Meanwhile, the sex abuse scandal and a year of no in-person church attendance due to the pandemic combine to seriously diminish the Church’s moral authority. If Walther’s more optimistic view of Catholicism is to prevail though, Catholics need to mine not only the roots he mentioned, but also Scripture to confront crises that increasingly affect millions of people if not all creation. Walther believes “thoughtfully articulated Catholic politics has a great deal to offer our officially secular republic.”

In the early 1980s, Vatican II’s influence peeked in our diocese where offices for peace and justice and for women had respected places in the chancery. Bishop Flanagan called for unilateral nuclear disarmament. *The Catholic Free Press*



MC Escher

gave our Catholic Worker prayer witness for the ordination of women more coverage than the service for the ordination of men. Without sacrificing opposition to abortion, the Church took up progressive causes.

Unfortunately, during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, virtually every progressive cause took a back seat to abortion, lay leadership declined, offices for peace and justice and for women closed. Here in Worcester, when huge crowds gathered for immigrants’ rights, the March for Science, the march for gun control, Black Lives Matter, and the striking Saint Vincent Hospital nurses, there was no visible Catholic presence (save the Catholic Worker), despite the fact that the Church has positions on immigration,

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Critical Moment for Climate

by Anna Blackman

Editor’s Note: The author is a member of the Glasgow [Scotland] Catholic Worker community.

In November, Glasgow will play host to the COP [Conference of the Parties]26 at which discussions will revolve around how to work towards the targets set out in the Paris Agreement and UN Convention on Climate Change. There has been a great deal of excitement generated by the event and a definite feeling of momentum. However, this is also balanced by a sense of skepticism in whether the conference’s aims will be met, as well as what, and who, is being left out of the discussion. Here at the Glasgow Catholic Worker, we are acutely aware that there are still necessary topics that seem to be neglected, including living simply and the link between the climate crisis and violence, both of which are glaringly omitted from the official narrative.

If you look at the statement from COP President, Alok Sharma, on the official COP26 website, you’ll see that it begins by addressing how COVID has disrupted the “global economy.” He continues on to state that we need to “build back better”; “We can deliver green recoveries across the globe that bring in good jobs, trillions in investment and ground-breaking new technology.” It is not that a green recovery is bad per se, but this approach smacks of a technological and economic mindset.

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Deep Water

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global warming, gun violence, racism, and the dignity of labor. The Church became ever more identified with the Republican party, so much so that many clergy and Catholic newspapers raised questions whether it was moral for Catholics to vote for Democrats or for priests to give Democratic politicians Communion.

In many ways, the Church continues to defy the political culture in its practice of the works of mercy through soup kitchens, free medical clinics, and other direct service to those in need, but Catholicism loses relevancy with young people who feel racism, sexism, gun violence, the increasing wealth gap, lack of affordable health care and higher education, the climate emergency, war, and nuclear weaponry threaten their future. If it's a sin to vote for Biden because of abortion, why is it not a sin to vote for Trump because of climate change, gun control, immigration, and racism?

In this time of polarization, when many folks rely on dangerous internet sources of disinformation, society needs voices that mine the treasure of the Gospel and apply it to current crises. Integrity needs to be worth more to us than partisan politics. We must never trade away the lives of anyone to protect others. As Ammon Hennacy used to say, "When we vote for lesser evil, we soon forget that we voted for evil."

Both liberal and conservative religious congregations of many denominations are shrinking. Young people see religions as boring, irrelevant, or dangerously conformist. The traditional Catholic Prayer of Election, though, says: "*Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your spirit and we shall be created, and you will renew the face of the earth.*"

Think about it. The Holy Spirit will fill us with the fire of love and She will renew the Earth. Isn't that better than even two terms of any politician in the White House? Don't forget that some of the most influential people in history — Francis of Assisi, Mahatma Gandhi, Dorothy Day,—were not presidents, popes, generals, or bankers.

Peter Maurin, the co-founder with



Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker, said it so well in 1936 when he wrote:

Writing about the Catholic Church, a radical writer says:

"Rome will have to do more than to play a waiting game; she will have to use some of the dynamite inherent in her message."

To blow the dynamite of a message is the only way to make the message dynamic.

If the Catholic Church is not today the dominant social dynamic force, it is because Catholic scholars have failed to blow the dynamite of the Church.

Catholic scholars have taken the dynamite

of the Church, have wrapped it up in nice phraseology, placed it in an hermetic container and sat on the lid.

It is about time to blow the lid off so the Catholic Church may again become the dominant social dynamic force.

So long as the Church sits on the sideline of vital issues, she serves the *status quo* more than the Gospel. In this time of extreme wealth inequality as well as environmental and military threats to existence, we must stand up and be counted for justice and peace. Truth be told, most people are not actively engaged in evil occupations, but it's equally true that most people do not confront those who crush the weak and kill the future. For crying out loud, we are reluctant to even ask folks to wear a mask in crowded places during a pandemic. Meanwhile, Scripture is clear, "**Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.**" Revelation 3:16.

But take heart. Sociologists say that systemic change can be enacted by activists representing as little as 3.5% of the population. We can be the teaspoon of leaven that raises many cups of dough, the tiny mustard seed that grows into a large plant, and the final straw that breaks the camel's back. With the Holy Spirit, we can blow the dynamite of the Church and rescue Catholicism from deep water. Ω

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CATHOLIC



RADICAL



Published on 100% post-consumer recycled paper every two months by:

The Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community

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Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

History of Saint Vincent Nurses Strike

On March 8, 2021, after a two-year effort to convince their employer, Dallas-based Tenet Healthcare, to implement desperately needed staffing increases, nurses at Worcester's Saint Vincent Hospital voted to go on strike.

The strike was a last resort. In 2020, nurses filed more than 600 official "unsafe staffing" reports informing management

no action was taken by Tenet to address the staffing concerns, more than 100 nurses left Saint Vincent for other hospitals, with better staffing, pay, and benefits.

In December, more than 400 nurses participated in an informational picket to call for public support for safer staffing, particularly in light of the growing second surge of the pandemic. Tenet again refused

the improvements the nurses are seeking.

Since the strike began, Tenet hired replacement nurses at \$110 an hour, more than twice the usual pay, offering them between \$3,000 and \$10,000 signing bonuses. Tenet has continuously refused to accept the nurses' call for safe staffing levels and refused the mediator's request for federal arbitration to settle the strike.



that patient care conditions jeopardized their patients. Tenet refused to respond.

In March, 2020, more than 200 nurses from every unit and every shift attended a negotiation session with management to testify that staffing levels had harmed patient care. One nurse described conditions at the hospital as a "travesty, disgraceful, and shameful." Others described numerous patient falls, the onset of serious preventable complications, suicidal patients being left without one-on-one monitoring, and even preventable deaths directly attributable to inadequate staffing levels and unsafe nurse-patient assignments. Tenet did nothing.

In April, 2020, while nurses called for improved staffing levels and adequate PPE to meet the challenges of the pandemic, Tenet's corporate leaders touted their plan to use furloughs and hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars from the federal stimulus package "to ensure we were focused on maximizing our cash position."

In May, after management implemented a furlough of staff and daily staffing cuts, the nurses cast an overwhelming vote of "no confidence" in hospital CEO Carolyn Jackson and her management team. After

to address any of the issues raised.

Meanwhile, during the first three quarters of 2020, the corporation generated more than \$12 billion in revenue, and now has cash or cash equivalents of more than \$3 billion, a ten-fold increase over 2019. On February 10, 2021, the same day the nurses voted to authorize their strike, Tenet announced an annual profit of \$414 million. On March 2, Tenet's stock hit a high of \$54 per share, a more than 100 percent increase over the previous year.

In addition, while other hospitals cut back on elective surgeries to free up additional staff to support care for COVID-19 patients, Tenet pushed ahead with procedures, such as knee and hip replacements, colonoscopies, and cosmetic surgeries to generate revenue. In fact, Saint Vincent Hospital posted record profits in 2020 of \$73 million, four times the state average for hospitals and five times the profit margin for Worcester's UMass Memorial Medical Center, a facility that provides the staffing levels the nurses at St. Vincent are seeking, while also paying their nurses significantly more and providing better health and pension benefits. It is clear that Tenet can easily afford to provide

Despite Catholic teaching on the dignity of labor and the right of unions to strike, the nurses have seen virtually no support from the Diocese of Worcester. In response to that failing, on June 14 in the Saint Vincent atrium, Catholic Workers prayed to exorcize the sin of corporate greed from Tenet executives so the strike could be settled justly. In July, Catholic Workers began collecting signatures on a Catholic appeal for the striking nurses. One priest agreed that for-profit health care was an "abomination," but still refused to sign on. On August 12, after collecting the signatures of 202 Catholics, including seven priests, six nuns, and two deacons, the appeal was sent to Bishop Robert McManus, who sits on Tenet's board of directors, to Saint Vincent CEO Carolyn Jackson, and the media. Neither Ms. Jackson nor the bishop responded.

On August 14, eleven signatories of the Catholic appeal vigiled and prayed outside Saint Vincent's. Without a groundswell of community support, the nurses will be defeated, moving the nation closer to the day when all health care is for-profit, a prospect that will devastate working conditions and patient care. Ω



"Guernica" by Pablo Picasso

We Told You So

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

In the 1930s, Dorothy Day repeatedly denounced rising global anti-Semitism. Pope Pius XI, however, was silent when Mussolini banned Jewish children from public school and called on Catholics to avoid association with a "polluted race." Robert Gannon, the president of Fordham University, fired the leader of the Committee of Catholics to Fight Anti-Semitism, a group Dorothy helped found, saying "his activities on behalf of Jews in America had become a source of annoyance and embarrassment." Peter Maurin published a unheeded plea for the US to welcome Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi terror.

In 1938, when civil war broke out in Spain, the Vatican and the American Catholic Church strongly endorsed the Nazi-backed fascists against Communist-backed Republicans. Dorothy Day decried the atrocities of both sides and was widely denounced. She recognized the indiscriminate bombing of Guernica, Spain by Hitler as a harbinger of modern war. When World War II began, Dorothy, holding fast to Gospel nonviolence, stood alone among Catholic leaders; none of whom had lifted a finger to prevent a war they now declared just.

The escalating mass slaughter of civilians from Coventry, to Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki confirmed the wisdom of Dorothy's pacifism, but never diminished most Catholics' insistence that

the war and its means were just. Dorothy's prediction that the atomic bombs would provoke an arms race that would threaten all creation also proved spot on.

And now, forty-one years after Dorothy Day's death, Catholic Workers cannot help but shake their heads in dismay at the historical confirmation that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, wars Catholic Workers opposed from the outset and the American bishops deemed just, were catastrophic failures that left hundreds of thousands of children, women, and men dead. Thankfully, Pope John Paul II denounced the Iraq war as "a defeat for humanity," and many Americans agreed, but, twenty years later, we still hear just warriors suggest that more killing could eventually have led to victory. Their claim is as unsupportable as the argument that the United States lost the Vietnam War because the peace movement forced the military to fight "with one hand tied behind its back." Over two million South East Asians were killed during that war. I shudder to think how much carnage militarists wish we had unleashed.

Isn't it long past time for Christians to unify their voices with the extraordinarily nonviolent one of Jesus to oppose violence and war under any pretext?

Mahatma Gandhi said it well: "People try nonviolence for a week, and when it 'doesn't work,' they go back to violence, which hasn't worked for centuries." Ω

Conference

(Continued from Page 1)

In other words, it speaks to me at least, of more of the same capitalist, financially driven approach we have seen for decades, but a little bit greener, a little bit "nicer." What this approach seems to totally miss, is that climate change is not just an economic issue requiring economic reform. What is needed is a complete structural revolution that challenges business as normal.

Care for creation has been central to the Catholic Worker mission from its very beginning when Peter Maurin advocated for a return to the land in his proposed "green revolution." He spoke of the values of cult, culture, and cultivation, using the means of "agronomic universities" where people could reconnect to, and live in closer harmony with the earth. Importantly, Maurin's vision wasn't about "building up" but rather was about scaling down, living simply, moving away from an industrial, technocratic paradigm. Without doing so, it seems difficult to see how the intended aims of COP26 can be realised. The COP documents speaks of how the UK has been a world leader in showing that 'climate action can go hand-in-hand with economic growth.' Surely though, the pursuit of unlimited economic growth is what has got us into this mess in the first place and it is the very structures that underpin this mindset that need to be dismantled. It seems questionable as to how we can really curb the effects of climate destruction whilst remaining in a system that values profit over people, and champions individual acquisition and greed.

Furthermore, climate change is not just an economic issue, but is also one of structural violence and injustice. The selfishness and greed of more affluent countries disproportionately affects those in less wealthy nations, causing migration and displacement which will only increase as the crisis continues. Simultaneously, we respond to this displacement not with understanding or acceptance of our role, but often with violence, in order to protect the resources we already have, or the ones

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Dorothy Day and Strikes

by John Loughery and Blythe Randolph

*Editor's Note: The following passages are excerpted from the authors' book **Dorothy Day: Dissenting Voice of the American Century**.*

Between 1936 and 1938, Dorothy aligned the Worker with the striking seamen in New York City in their prolonged fight against their corrupt union as they worked to establish their own association (which would become the National Maritime Union), teamed with Mary Heaton Vorse to study conditions in the steel mills and coal mines of Pennsylvania, and interviewed both John L. Lewis at his union's headquarters in Washington, DC, and Governor Frank Murphy, a Catholic and the most labor-sympathetic governor in the country, at the state capitol in Michigan.... [Dorothy] went to Arkansas to meet with a hundred black tenant farmers who had been evicted from their land for attempting to join the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. Dumbstruck by the poverty in the tent colony she saw, where many of the children and adults were dressed in flour sacks, she immediately sent a telegram to Eleanor Roosevelt, describing the scene. At the first lady's request, the governor of Arkansas made his own inspection but announced that all he had seen was a community of lazy blacks being stirred up by "some Catholic woman" from out of state.

Pittsburgh was probably the city Dorothy visited most often in the 1930s. In what was then the United States' leading and most contentious industrial center, she was thrilled to meet Father Charles Owen Rice. Rice was one of the most committed "labor priests" in the country, and it was exciting to learn about the Catholic Radical Alliance and the St. Joseph House he and Fathers Carl Hensler and Barry O'Toole had established there. The Alliance has been founded, the priests wrote, because it was high time in the United States for a "changed and reformed social order that

will be Christian and just in every sense of the word." She was particularly taken with the zeal of the priests who had walked the picket lines with striking Heinz workers...



Dorothy Day before her 1973 arrest and jail sentence with striking United Farm Workers in California.

Photo by Bob Fitch

En route to Flint, Michigan, to cover the much-publicized 1937 autoworkers' strike against General Motors, Dorothy accepted the invitation of Archbishop John McNicholas of Cincinnati to spend a day with several midwest bishops and talk about the [Catholic Worker]. McNicholas was the sort of prelate she could respect unequivocally: he didn't see the struggle for unionization as un-American, his sympathies were with the men in Flint, and he sent checks periodically in answer to the Catholic Worker's increasingly desperate appeals. She went on her way to Cincinnati with the archbishop's warm encouragement.

Once in Flint, Dorothy met with

strike leaders, including Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) director John Brophy, a Catholic, to whom she made an impassioned plea to be sure that his men continued to maintain the Gandhian technique of the sit-down strike, which the Flint labor action had originated in the United States. One night she was helped through a basement window to spend the evening in one of the plants occupied by the strikers.... The Flint strike and its method of organization also pointed out, she wrote when she arrived home, the need for Catholic college students to volunteer as "apostles of labor... taking advantage as the Communist does of the opportunities each strike offers to reach the masses, to learn from them and to teach them."

...On the day of her departure from Chicago, John Cogley, a future editor of *Commonweal* in the 1960s and the religion editor of the *New York Times* and friend of his, Paul Byrne, a Loyola University sophomore, took Dorothy to the bus station. "At the last minute," Cogley recalled, [Dorothy told us] "to immediately go to the site of the Republic Steel Co. strike and join the massive picket line there. She had heard there might be violence. It was

possible we would be caught up in it. 'Just think,' she said cheerfully, 'you might be killed and the Church would have its first labor martyrs.'"

They were not among the ten protesters murdered when the police fired into the crowd...."

In some of her talks, Dorothy sought to make it clear that she did not regard unionization as a panacea for all America's ills, least of all its spiritual ills. If working men and women were solely concerned with better wages for themselves and not with larger ideas about community, societal change, and our God-ordained obligations to one another, the labor struggle would mean nothing in the long run. Ω

Solidarity in Scotland

On May 4, during the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday, the United Kingdom's Home Office, which handles immigration, showed up in Glasgow, Scotland at the apartment of two Muslim Indian nationals and took them into custody. Word spread throughout the city and thousands of friends, college students, and activists packed the street blocking the Home Office



van and chanting, "These are our neighbors! Let them go!" After a four-hour standoff, the van's doors opened and the men stepped out, thanking the cheering crowd.

One protester told *Sky News*, "I'd ask Christians to reflect on what it would feel like to have your house raided on Christmas Day." Another activist told the *Guardian*, "They messed with the wrong city." Ω

Climate

(Continued from Page 4)



UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE SCOTLAND 2021

that we want to gain. We see this acutely in the role that militarism has to play in the climate crisis. The US military alone has a carbon footprint bigger than as many as 140 countries and there is a bitter, twisted irony in the fact that COP26 is being hosted so close to Faslane, home to the UK Trident submarines. How can we seriously claim to be a world leader in environmentalism when we continue to build up a nuclear system designed to destroy the earth?

My hope is that these issues will be realized during the COP26 discussions, and that our global leaders will have a sincere conversion of heart, embracing an ethic of repentance and sacrifice. I hope that we will be presented with a seamless garment approach that realises that the commitment to non-violence to the earth is inextricably linked to a commitment to non-violence towards each other. I fear however, that this will not be the case, and that the elitism and injustice already present in our system continues. Ultimately only time will tell if COP26 is able to achieve a sustained commitment to the climate crisis. Unfortunately, time is the one thing that we don't have. As Day and Maurin agreed, I think we need be careful about placing all our trust in those at the top to make changes and not forget the role of personalism and resistance. The excitement COP26 has generated is encouraging, and we are witnessing an overwhelming effort of communities to amp up pressure on the conference delegates; however, it will require a continued effort to bring about radical change. Hopefully this effort can be sustained and bring about the green revolution that we so desperately need. Ω

Climate Corner



Globe Collaborative, a natural cleaning products company, announced, "We're moving Beyond Plastic with 350 plastic-free products today and 100% plastic-free by 2025."



The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded in July that, unless humans reduce CO₂ pollution 50% by 2030 and eliminate it by 2045, irreversible climate change will kill millions. In Massachusetts, 40% of CO₂ comes from home heating and cooling. In 2019, the state pledged to convert a million homes to highly-efficient electric mini-splits by 2030, but, so far, only 461 have made the switch, including Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker. Apparently, the slow response is because the Mass Save program which give rebates for the change is administered by utility companies. Conversion costs over \$10,000 up front, but Mass Save drags its feet, sending homeowners the \$3,000 -\$6,000 rebates 3-6 months later.



CNN reported on August 24 that a Norwegian company has created what it calls the world's first zero-emission, autonomous cargo ship. Developed by chemical company Yara International, the Yara Birkeland was designed to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides, which are toxic pollutants and greenhouse gases, and carbon dioxide, as well as moving freight away from roads to the sea, replacing 40,000 truck journeys a year.

The shipping industry currently accounts for between 2.5% and 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the International Maritime Organization. Nearly all of Norway's electricity is generated by hydroelectric power, which is generally considered to have much lower carbon emissions than burning fossil fuels, although it still produces greenhouse gases. Ω

Letters



Scott,
When *The Catholic Radical* arrived, Betsy read the exorcism aloud! This is very good. It pulls a lot of things together. I worked for more than 12 years as a certified nursing assistant and know the scene. Have you read Dorothy Day's column, April 1949 — she called Cardinal Spellman's response to the [grave diggers] strike "a temptation of the devil to that most awful of all wars, the war between the clergy and the laity, a heightening of the tension which is there and which it is the work of both to try to overcome."

Brian Terrell
Strangers & Guests
Catholic Worker Farm
Maloy, Iowa

Hi, Scott,

I read you guys were short for gardening space there. I'm not much of a gardener myself, but I do have more land than I can use. Yes, it's in remotest Barre, which is 35 minutes drive outside the city. But there's 19 acres sitting there mostly unused, and just waiting for some good land use. The Many Hands Organic Farm CSA is next door, and could potentially be helpful. Let me know if anyone is interested.

Matt Shorten

Editor's Note: We thanked Matt, but told him we did not have the hands to utilize the land he mentioned, but he is eager to find someone who does. Please drop us a line and we'll forward it to Matt.

Dear Goodwoman Claire and Goodman Scott,
I was impressed with your latest newsletter, especially the exorcism performed at Saint Vincent's. I am a strong union guy and was active in the state employee union ADSCMEI. The article on gender also hit home.

Looking out at some ordinary trees, I recently said to myself "That's all I need to feel whole and complete." This reminds me of your reverence for your little garden.

Phil Brewer
Rutland, Massachusetts

Hi Scott,

I just finished reading **Haunted**, and wanted to write to tell you how much I enjoyed it. What I found most enlightening was your focus on the African-American experience and history in the greater Worcester area. Although I've done extensive reading about Black history in years past, I was not aware of the local connections.

I adopted two boys, Dan and Ryan. Dan is bi-racial. Ryan is Black.

Through the years, there have been numerous instances in which I observed first-hand the display of prejudice and blame that involved my sons. When I identified myself as their father, I would immediately detect a subtle shift in behavior by the accusers. Raising kids of color also made me aware of my own imperfect behavior, especially in the past. My friend, Elaine, who was an elementary school principal in Worcester, cautioned me early on that kids of color are often blamed incorrectly in various situations. My older son, Dan, would often say, both in jest and seriousness, "Blame the Black man."

I attended a one-week conference in Alabama just before Covid shutdown travel in early March 2020. The topic was

the Civil Rights Movement, organized by Road Scholar Educational Travel for Adults. Our keynote speaker was Bryan Stevenson, whom you mention in your book. We also met Freedom Riders, a survivor of the Birmingham bombing which killed four girls, and participants in the Bloody Sunday March in Selma.

During the conference, I wrote in my journal, "By the end of the day, many of us were exhausted from emotional overload. It is difficult to hear stories of what can only be described as brutality and hatred, directed against other human beings, simply because of the color of their skin. Many of us see parallels to what is happening today under the current administration."

I recommend reading: **Just Mercy** by Bryan Stevenson, **While the World Watched** by Dr. Carolyn Maull McKinstry, **Slavery by Another Name** by Douglas Blackmen, **The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness**, by Michelle Alexander, and **The Warmth of Other Suns** and **Caste** by Isabel Wilkerson.

In my career as a hospice nurse, I was often told that I was doing God's work; two of the corporal works of mercy, visiting the sick and burying the dead. Claire and your staff continue to do God's work. I was so glad to read how you have been blessed with children and grandchildren.

The work you do does make a difference. God bless all of you!

Mark Hamel
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Catholic Worker Calendar

October 9 - Vigil of Catholics for Saint Vincent Nurses- If the strike is not settled, join us in support of nurses. Saint Vincent Hospital's Summer Street entrance, 11-Noon.

October 13 & 27, November 10 - Evening Prayer: Join us for prayer & Taize chant. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow. 7 PM

We Oppose
War Euthanasia Racism
Poverty Executions Sexism
Abortion CO₂ Pollution
We Support
Prayer Love Humor Dancing Nature
Singing Long-Distance Running

Mason Street Musings

Every year, Scott and I question whether or not we can continue our annual vigil at Holy Cross College calling for the removal of ROTC from a Catholic campus. It's the problem of an over-committed schedule, not the topic that gives pause. The habit of war is so ingrained in America that even after twenty years of destruction and loss in Afghanistan, there remains the need to repeat, to shout at the top of our lungs, the well-known maxim: "War is not healthy for children and other living things." To train for war is also un-Christian.

Our stand-out is always held on September 14th, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross which this year followed a glorious long week-end with children and grandchildren on Cape Cod. Home for less than 24 hours, we hustled to the college feeling guilty we were so ill-prepared. Our modest effort, however, proved worthwhile. As with every year, many students walked past us, some regarding us as oddities,

most declining our leaflets with a polite "no thank you." One young man took a handful of flyers from Dan Marshall, a



Michael Digregorio

Holy Cross alumni who drove all the way from New York City for the occasion, and tore them up. But other students, including several enrolled in ROTC, stopped for earnest exchange.

Pope Francis speaks often of the need

to develop a culture of encounter. We must be sincere in this work especially now in a time of pandemic and polarization. Encounter is the antidote to the fear and numbing resignation generated from news reports of multiple catastrophe. You never know what these encounters might bring. After chatting for ten minutes with a Holy Cross student whose father was in the army, Dan told us, "You might have a new volunteer at the Catholic Worker."

In addition to our three permanent guests, three men and three women received emergency hospitality on Mason Street this summer. Among them was Clive, a lumbering man, six feet seven inches tall, who suffered from schizophrenia. He was existing on a thin rim. Evicted from yet another apartment and banned from Worcester's city shelter, he had recently walked out of a crisis stabilization unit in a nearby town, because the female staff kept calling him "a big dummy." He had given up the drugs and "fornicating," he said, but the expulsions from so many residences had taxed the patience of his family and case worker.

Listening to Clive talk, I briefly wondered if I had been precipitous in offering him one night of rest at the house. He was such a big man. If he had a breakdown, how would we get him to leave? "Help," I prayed. It was then I heard Clive say, "All I want is to know Christ in my heart, and to see Him in others."

"Me too," I said. Clive spent a peaceful night on Mason Street and departed the next morning with an effusive, "God bless you."

Ash beetles have ravaged the ash trees of New England including the one beside our back porch, rendering it brittle and likely to cause harm during the next big storm. Next Wednesday, an arborist will saw the tree down. The job costs a pretty penny. After more than a year of being generously sustained by contributions, our coffers are low, so we ask for your support. Thank you to all who have so faithfully supported us. Wishing everyone an autumn of many encounters. God bless, **Claire**

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